

Title: A Survey on the Use of Social Media and Instant Messaging in Providing Treatment Information for Cleft Patients: A Single Foundation's Experience

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Introduction

The Noordhoff Craniofacial Foundation Philippines, Inc. (NCFPI) has been providing subsidies for the treatment of craniofacial, cleft lip, and cleft palate patients, especially indigents, since 2006. In part, NCFPI created private Facebook and Messenger groups for patients, Foundation staff, and volunteers, which serve as avenues of support and communication where members can discuss treatments, share information and personal experiences, and seek advice from one another.

Results

The study's target sample size was 319 and a total of 184 responses were initially noted but out of these, 43.3% (138/319) met the inclusion criteria and completed the questionnaire. However, this did not affect the study's internal validity since descriptive analysis was performed and inferences were not made about the target population.

The NCFP Family Support Group was easiest to use while the Peer Support Group was the most difficult. See Table 1.

Most of the members of the NCFP Family Support Group responded that this group helped in decision-making for their treatment while a little less than half of the members of the Parents' Support Group and the Peer Support Group found those groups helpful in decision-making regarding treatment. See Table 1.

A quarter to a third of the members of the NCFP Family Support Group and Parents' Support Group found that these groups led to a decrease in the perceived need for in-person consultation or emergency visits. See Table 1.

Majority in the NCFP Family Support Group were satisfied with their experience in this group while only half of the members of the Parents' Support Group and Peer Support Group were satisfied with their experience in their respective groups. See Table 2.

Overall, 94.5% had a positive experience while none had a negative experience in the use of all three groups.

Discussion

The finding that participants found the NCFP Family Support Group easiest to use is concordant with a 2022 report stating that Facebook was the favorite social media platform and most-used platform by Filipino social media users [2].

Most members of the NCFP Family Support Group responded it helped in their treatment decision-making although, whether the type of information that has helped these participants are objective and educational or subjective and emotionally supportive or a combination is unknown.

Regarding their perceived need for in-person visits, the participants may not necessarily prefer in-person visits to their healthcare provider. It has been suggested that the perceived urgency of the patient's condition, negative perceptions on the quality of care, inherent limitations in the management of patients, and technological issues may be contributing factors to patients' preference for in-person visits in the Philippine setting [3].

Methods

The quantitative descriptive study design utilized a six-part online questionnaire carried out on members of the private Facebook and Messenger groups created by the Noordhoff Craniofacial Foundation Philippines, Inc. The survey tool gathered general information about the participants and included questions regarding their perception of the social media and instant messaging groups. Responses were collected over a 4-week period and data were analyzed using STATA ver.16.0.

Table 1. Comparison of Different Information Parameters and the Social Media Groups

Parameter	Yes		No		Maybe		TOTAL
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Easiest social media platform to use NCF Family Support Group (Facebook) Peer Support Group (Messenger) Parents' Support Group (Messenger)	106 11 21	76.81 7.97 15.22	N/A N/A N/A	N/A N/A N/A	N/A N/A N/A	N/A N/A N/A	n = 138
Helped in decision making NCF Family Support Group (Facebook) Peer Support Group (Messenger) Parents' Support Group (Messenger)	123 49 44	94.62 48.51 47.31	0 22 28	0.00 21.78 30.11	7 30 21	5.38 29.70 22.58	130 101 93
Decreased need for in-person consultation with doctor/ professional NCF Family Support Group (Facebook) Peer Support Group (Messenger) Parents' Support Group (Messenger)	50 26 26	38.17 25.74 27.96	59 50 49	45.04 49.50 52.69	22 25 18	16.79 24.75 19.35	131 101 93
Decreased need for emergency hospital or consultation visits NCF Family Support Group (Facebook) Peer Support Group (Messenger) Parents' Support Group (Messenger)	43 27 23	33.33 26.73 25.27	65 52 47	50.39 51.49 51.65	21 22 21	16.28 21.78 23.08	129 101 91

Table 2. Satisfaction Among Patients and Caregivers of NCFPI in the Use of Social Media

Parameter	Yes		No		Somewhat		TOTAL
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
NCF Family Support Group (Facebook)	124	95.38	0	0.00	6	4.62	130
Peer Support Group (Messenger)	51	50.50	23	22.77	27	26.73	101
Parents' Support Group (Messenger)	49	52.69	26	27.96	18	19.35	93

Conclusion

The perception of the patient and caregiver participants of the Noordhoff Craniofacial Foundation Philippines, Inc on the use of social media and instant messaging in providing treatment information for cleft patients is different among the three groups. However, the overall experience of the use of social media groups was positive.

References

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